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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



FARMERS' BULLETIN



Has been rev.
--see rev.ed.
binders at
end of file.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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APRIL 6, 1915.

Contribution from the Office of Markets and Rural Organization, Charles J. Brand, Chief.

THE COMMUNITY EGG CIRCLE.

By C. E. BASSETT, *Specialist in Cooperative Organization*, and W. H. KERR, *Investigator in Market Business Practice*.

MARKETING THE EGG CROP.

When it is estimated that the annual production of poultry and eggs in the United States is in excess of \$600,000,000—equal to the value of the hay or the wheat crop—and when it is estimated that there is a total loss of nearly 8 per cent of the eggs marketed,¹ the importance of this subject is evident.

This great loss is due largely to improper handling between the farm and the market. Most farmers look upon eggs as a by-product, and the returns as so much clear gain. The hens forage for a living, eggs are gathered when convenient and kept almost anywhere. With such carelessness and a combination of mongrel stock, dirty nests, stolen nests of broody hens, unconfined males, late maturing pullets, and other undesirable conditions, is it any wonder that the product includes such a high percentage of small, cracked, dirty, stale, heated, and even rotten eggs?

Occasionally the accumulations of all these kinds of eggs are taken to the country merchants and exchanged for merchandise. The merchant usually buys these eggs "case count," paying the same price for all kinds and sizes, provided they are eggs with an unbroken shell. Small production results in small or infrequent shipments.

¹ Pennington, M. E., and Pierce, H. C.—"The effect of the present method of handling eggs on the industry and on the product." In Yearbook of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1910.

NOTE.—Intended for all farmers who would be interested in the formation of a community circle for the marketing of eggs. It would be of especial interest at this time to farmers in the cotton belt who desire to diversify their farming because of the economic crisis which adversely affects the cotton crop at present.

REMEDIES.

Many of these losses can be prevented by:¹

- (a) Selecting pure breeds that lay more and larger eggs, such as the White Leghorns, Wyandottes, Plymouth Rocks, Rhode Island Reds, Orpingtons, etc.
- (b) Giving better care, food, and shelter, with dry, clean, vermin-proof nests.
- (c) Confining males except in breeding season.
- (d) Collecting eggs frequently, especially in hot or muggy weather.
- (e) Storing eggs in a dry, clean, cool place.
- (f) Using small and dirty eggs at home.
- (g) Marketing frequently, with protection at all times from heat.
- (h) Selling for cash on a basis of size and quality, "loss off" instead of "case count."
- (i) Using an attractive package.
- (j) Combining shipments as a matter of economy.

COOPERATIVE MARKETING.

By uniting several egg producers in an association more can be accomplished in these essentials. One very successful egg company has a large incubator house with 12,000 eggs capacity, where early chicks are produced for the members at a low cost. This is done in order to obtain early maturing pullets, thus securing eggs during the fall, when eggs are usually scarce. The company also has a receiving room for eggs where they are candled, sorted to weight (about 24 ounces to the dozen), packed in cartons, and shipped on contract orders. Their eggs are all guaranteed to be according to grade, they advertise the fancy grades on their cartons and cases, and market prices are paid to the members. Twice a year dividends are paid each member in proportion to the amount of eggs marketed through the company and the time of year eggs were brought in, a larger dividend being paid per dozen for eggs brought in during the fall and winter than for those brought in during the spring and summer, estimated by months. A regular trade is established with discriminating consumers, with city clubs, with the best class of hotels and restaurants, and with fancy grocers for a supply each day or week.

The reputation thus established enables this association to fix its price at several cents per dozen above the regular market quotations, as fancy trade is willing to pay a premium for a guaranteed article. Most egg circles cooperate in buying their chicken feed and other poultry supplies.

ATTRACTIVE PACKAGE.

All food products should be delivered in a clean, attractive package. Some of the most successful egg shippers have discarded the dirty wooden case and are using a heavy fiber-board gift case, which will hold from 15 to 30 pasteboard cartons. Each carton has compartments for 12 eggs. Upon both the cartons and the case can be

¹ Farmers' Bulletin No. 528—Hints to poultry raisers, by Harry M. Lamon, of the Animal Husbandry Division, Bureau of Animal Industry.

printed such advertising as may be wished. This style of package is especially desirable for the fancy retail grocer who can have his firm name included in the advertising. The fiber-board case is not expensive, forms a good protection to the eggs in shipping, and is worthy of trial.

MARKETING BY PARCEL POST.

With a firm container, parcel post can be used for small shipments to private homes within first and second zones; that is, 150 miles. Each egg should be wrapped in paper to hold it snugly on end, in its own individual compartment of the container, so that it has no play; and after the container is closed it should be securely wrapped in strong wrapping paper and tied with coarse strong cord.¹

MARKETING THROUGH THE CREAMERY.

Where there is a successful creamery established in the neighborhood, eggs can be delivered to it with the cream or milk. Creamery officials can often work up a fancy trade with those who buy the butter. Marketing through the creamery has been very successful.²

ORGANIZING THE CIRCLE.

The following forms are offered as aids in organizing, managing, and auditing a community cooperative egg circle or association. They are subject to such changes as will make them best adapted to the local conditions.

While at first the number of eggs to be marketed may not warrant a central station, with a manager to inspect, grade, and market the whole product, the aim should be to develop to that state. It is the only way to secure a uniform grade, which will attract the highest class of trade.

PRELIMINARY AGREEMENT.

We, the undersigned, citizens of County, State of, do hereby agree to form ourselves into an association, to be known as the Egg Circle, and agree to abide by the rules for the conduct of the business which may be adopted by a majority of the members in regular session.

Name.	Address.	Number of hens kept.

¹ For further information see Farmers' Bulletin No. 594, "Shipping eggs by parcel post," by Lewis B. Flohr, of the Office of Markets and Rural Organization.

² Farmers' Bulletin No. 445, "Marketing eggs through the creamery," by Rob R. Slocum of the Bureau of Animal Industry.

CONSTITUTION.

ARTICLE 1.—*Name.*

The name of this association shall be the Egg Circle and its place of business shall be at

ARTICLE 2.—*Objects.*

The objects shall be to secure and improve better strains of poultry; to produce more eggs of good color and size; to handle eggs more carefully in order to avoid waste; to pack a uniform grade of clean, fresh eggs, in order to be able to guarantee them and thus create a reputation; to market same more directly to the consumers; to purchase supplies in a cooperative way, and to do such other things as may prove of benefit to the members and the community.

ARTICLE 3.—*Officers.*

The officers of the circle shall be a president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, and two trustees, the five to constitute a board of managers. They shall be elected at the regular annual meeting, to be held on the second Monday in January of each year and they shall serve one year or until their successors are elected.

ARTICLE 4.—*Duties of officers.*

The officers shall perform the usual duties connected with their several offices. Unless the board of managers elects a manager, the secretary-treasurer shall act as manager, and, in addition to keeping all records, shall have charge of the buying of all supplies; the collecting, inspecting, grading, and packing of the eggs; the securing of orders from the most profitable class of customers (such as first-class hotels, restaurants, and private trade); the making of all shipments and collecting of accounts, settling with all members on the same basis for the same class of eggs.

The manager shall give a bond in twice the sum that he is liable to handle at any one time, the cost of said bond to be paid for by the circle. He shall keep a careful account and record of all money transactions, which account shall be inspected and audited not less than once in each three months by two competent persons, with a yearly audit just before the annual meeting, the report of such audit to be made in writing to said annual meeting.

ARTICLE 5.—*Membership*

Any person may become a member of this circle by paying the annual fee of \$1 and agreeing to live up to the rules of the circle.

ARTICLE 6.—*Voting.*

Any member in good standing shall be entitled to cast one vote at any meeting of the circle, but no proxies shall be allowed.

ARTICLE 7.—*Amendments.*

This constitution may be amended at any annual meeting or at any special meeting called for that purpose, provided that two-thirds of all members present vote for such change; and provided further that at least 10 days' notice of such proposed amendment shall have been given the members.

BY-LAWS.

1. Members must deliver to the circle all eggs produced by their hens, except those for home use, and those from stolen nests of unknown age.

2. Eggs must be gathered daily (twice daily in hot or muggy weather) and kept in a cold place. No eggs older than 7 days shall be delivered to the collector. Artificial

eggs only may be used as nest eggs, and the nests must be kept clean. Broody hens must be confined away from nesting places.

3. Members may deliver eggs to the circle only from their own hens.

4. The manager shall have power to pay a higher price for white or brown shelled eggs, according to the demands of the market.¹ Eggs that do not average 24 ounces to the dozen shall be paid for by weight on the above basis.

5. With the exception of during the mating season, all male birds must be kept apart from the flock of hens. The manager shall have power to pay a small premium for these infertile eggs, if the market warrants.

6. The manager may refuse to accept "dirties." If accepted, they shall be taken at a discount. Eggs must not be cleaned.

(If each member is permitted to pack the eggs, the following by-law applies:)

7. Each member shall receive a rubber stamp, giving the brand of the circle and the recorded number of the member. Each egg must be stamped plainly and neatly on the big end. Only fresh, clean eggs of standard weight, and uniform color may be packed in the cartons, holding a dozen each, the cartons being furnished by the circle, and the member's stamp also being placed on the face of the carton. In case any complaint is received in regard to any eggs, the member whose stamp is on the eggs shall be charged with any expense of settlement made necessary by his carelessness.

(If the eggs are brought to a central house for packing, the following by-law applies:)

8. All eggs shall be collected and delivered to the circle packing house by such means as the annual meeting may determine. Each member shall be given a receipt for the number of eggs he delivers. These eggs shall be candled, graded, and packed by the manager or his assistants and each member be given credit for the number of each grade. All eggs of the same grade shall then be pooled, and when sold payment shall be made on the basis of the price received for each grade, less all necessary expenses.

9. The manager shall be paid a commission of .. per cent on the net sales of the business, not to exceed a total amount of \$. per year.

10. Any member failing to live up to these by-laws may be expelled from membership or sufficient sum withheld from his sales to reimburse the circle for any loss occasioned by his failure. In all such cases the member shall first have the right to be heard before the board of managers.

11. Members may voluntarily withdraw from the circle, to take effect only at the end of the business year, by giving 30 days' notice to the manager.

COMMUNITY EGG CIRCLE RECEIPT FORMS.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRINTING AND BINDING.

Forms A, B, and C should be numbered in triplicate. Form A (original) should be printed on white paper, Form B (duplicate) and Form C (triplicate) on paper of different tints, preferably light bond, and bound in books of 25 numbers to the book. Forms B and C should be perforated.

¹ New York and Chicago markets will often pay several cents a dozen more for white-shelled eggs, while Boston prefers the brown-shelled eggs. It is a case of market preference.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE.

The collector enters the total number of eggs received from a member in the spaces provided on Form A, using carbon sheets so that the date, member's name, circle number, and number of dozen eggs collected are given on all three forms. The collector, at the time of collection, delivers Form C to the member, which is a receipt for the number of eggs delivered to the collector.

At the end of the day the book containing the original and duplicate copies, Forms A and B, is turned in at the office.

As the eggs are candled and graded the number of dozens of each grade is placed upon Form A by the grader, the same information being shown on the carbon, or Form B. This then gives the member the proper credit for the number of dozens of each grade delivered.

Settlement is made for each pool or delivery, which in most cases will be covered by one receipt for each member. As returns for the shipments are received the amount due each member will be carried out in the price and total columns of Forms A and B. Check is then drawn for the amount due and forwarded to the member with Form B, which gives a statement of returns and a duplicate of the receipt which the member holds with the additional information of the grading and amount received for each grade. Form A remains in the book and is kept on file in the office to serve as a permanent record of settlements with the producer.

FORMS.

(Form A.)

Folio

No.

FARMVILLE POULTRY CIRCLE, FARMVILLE, VA.

Office copy of member's receipt.

Date,, 191...

Received of Circle No. .. the following:

	No.	Price.	Total.

Paid by check No.
Date, 191...

Checked by
Collector

THE COMMUNITY EGG CIRCLE.

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(Form B.)

No.

FARMVILLE POULTRY CIRCLE, FARMVILLE, VA.

Statement of returns and copy of member's receipt.

Date collected,, 191...

Mr., Circle No. the inclosed check is in payment of the following:

	No.	Price.	Total.
Less.....			
Total of check.....			

Checked by
 Collector
 Manager

(Form C.)

No.

FARMVILLE POULTRY CIRCLE, FARMVILLE, VA.

Member's receipt.

Date, 191...

Received of, Circle No. the following:

Collector

To MEMBER: Keep this receipt and compare with monthly statement sent you by Circle office.